

Utah CCGP – Closing the Gap Report (Large Group)
Hillcrest Jr. High School
Murray City School District
2006-2007

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if quarterly meetings with school counseling staff and at-risk students, and phone conversations with the parents of these at-risk students each term would make a significant difference in students' academic performance. Our experimental group was a sample of students which included 7th and 8th graders who were failing two or more classes around midterm, and 9th grade students who were failing one or more classes around midterm during terms 3 and 4 of the 2006-2007 school year. The counseling staff met one time during both of these terms with each of the sample (experimental) group members, and made one phone call a term to each of these students' parents. Our control group consisted of 7th and 8th graders who were failing two or more classes, and 9th grade students who were failing one or more classes at midterm time during 2nd term. The control group students did not meet with a member of the counseling staff and did not have their parents contacted regarding their academic progress. We examined the change in mid-term and final grades for 7th, 8th, and 9th grade students by tallying the presence of and the increase or reduction of "F" grades each term. Our hypothesis was that quarterly student/counselor meetings and parent phone conferences would improve our students' academic performance by reducing the number of F grades they received. Our results for our 7th, 8th, and 9th grade experimental group showed a significant reduction in the number of F's received during 3rd and 4th quarters when compared to the results of our control group during 2nd quarter—our quarterly meetings and parent contacts made a positive difference in our students' academic performance!

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Introduction

- The purpose of this study was to determine if quarterly meetings with counseling staff and at-risk students, and phone conferences with the parents of these at-risk students each term would make a significant difference in students' academic performance.
- The goal of this study was to reduce the frequency of failing grades the students received.

Participants

- During terms 2, 3, and 4 we monitored the academic progress of approximately 360 of our 7th, 8th, and 9th grade students (last names A-J in the alphabet). During terms 3 and 4 there were 131 different students (36 – 7th grade, 41 – 8th grade, and 54 – 9th grade) in the experimental group that the school counseling staff met with and contacted their parents regarding their academic progress. There were 69 failing students (12 – 7th grade, 31 – 8th grade, and 26 – 9th grade) in the control group during term 2 who did not meet with a counselor or have their parents contacted regarding their academic progress.

Method

- The project started at the beginning of 2nd quarter and concluded at the end of 4th quarter of the 2006-2007 school year.
- Before we met with each failing student during terms 3 and 4, we made phone calls home to the parents of each student we planned to conference with to update the parents of the students' current academic progress, to let them know we would be meeting with their student, and to inform them we would be sending home progress reports and other pertinent information. During our meetings with each of these failing students, we went over current grade printouts, discussed high school credit/graduation requirements, and gave study skill suggestions. We encouraged students to use their daily planners or tracking sheets to help them be organized and to let parents know their progress on a daily basis. We encouraged students/parents to have their students (who were failing math classes) attend the after school Math Tutoring Program for extra help. We informed students/parents of any failed core classes needing to be remediated and encouraged students to enroll in the school remediation program. As deemed appropriate, we would refer some of these failing students to our school social worker and/or our School Success Class for daily help/monitoring and to assist students with school organization and performance.
- Evaluation included the use of the Utah State Student Information System (SIS) Low Achievement Lists for both midterm and end of term reports. Our focus was on the presence of, and the increase or reduction of "F" grades at mid-term and at the end of each quarter.

RESULTS

Our hypothesis was that quarterly student/counselor meetings and parent phone conferences would improve our students' academic performance by reducing the number of "F" grades they received. Our results for our 7th, 8th, and 9th grade experimental group showed a significant reduction in the number of F's received during 3rd and 4th quarters when compared to the results of our control group during 2nd quarter. A delineation of the data can be seen below.

Term 2

	7 th & 8 th Grade Students Failing 2 or More Classes – 9 th Grade Students Failing 1 or More Classes at Midterm	Students Who Improved and Had No Failing Grades at Terms End	Students Who Decreased the Amount of F's They Had By the Terms End	Students Who Ended Up Failing the Same # of Classes As They Were at Midterm	Students Who Ended Up Failing More Classes Than They Were at Midterm
7th grade	12	1 (8%)	5 (42%)	6 (50%)	0 (0%)
8th grade	31	2 (6%)	9 (29%)	14 (46%)	6 (19%)
9th grade	26	5 (19%)	5 (19%)	10 (38%)	6 (23%)
*Total	69	8 (12%)	19 (28%)	30 (43%)	12 (17%)

Term 3

	7 th & 8 th Grade Students Failing 2 or More Classes – 9 th Grade Students Failing 1 or More Classes at Midterm	Students Who Improved and Had No Failing Grades at Terms End	Students Who Decreased the Amount of F's They Had By the Terms End	Students Who Ended Up Failing the Same # of Classes As They Were at Midterm	Students Who Ended Up Failing More Classes Than They Were at Midterm
7th grade	18	6 (33%)	7 (39%)	4 (22%)	1 (6%)
8th grade	27	1 (4%)	17 (63%)	6 (22%)	3 (11%)
9th grade	40	13 (33%)	16 (40%)	10 (25%)	1 (2%)
*Total	85	20 (24%)	40 (47%)	20 (24%)	5 (5%)

Term 4

	7 th & 8 th Grade Students Failing 2 or More Classes – 9 th Grade Students Failing 1 or More Classes at Midterm	Students Who Improved and Had No Failing Grades at Terms End	Students Who Decreased the Amount of F's They Had By the Terms End	Students Who Ended Up Failing the Same # of Classes As They Were at Midterm	Students Who Ended Up Failing More Classes Than They Were at Midterm
7th grade	30	10 (33%)	13 (44%)	4 (13%)	3 (10%)
8th grade	34	8 (24%)	17 (50%)	6 (18%)	3 (8%)
9th grade	39	16 (41%)	17 (44%)	4 (10%)	2 (5%)
*Total	103	34 (33%)	47 (46%)	14 (13%)	8 (8%)

DISCUSSION

After reviewing our results from terms 2, 3, and 4, we arrived at the following conclusions: During term 2 when there were no student/counselor meetings or parent contacts made it is evident that our eighth graders struggled the most academically. They ended the term with only 35% of the students decreasing their F's—65% of the students ended up receiving the same number of F's or more F's than they had at midterm.

Our data shows some positive results. In comparing our control group (term 2) with our experimental group (terms 3 and 4), the students at all grade levels showed a progressive reduction in the number of F's they received when the counseling staff was meeting with them and their parents were being contacted regarding academic progress. During term 2, only 40% of the students ended up decreasing the amount of F's they had. During term 3, 71% of the students ended up decreasing the amount of F's they had. During term 4, 79% of the students ended up decreasing the amount of F's they had—this is almost double the success rate of term 2!

It is also interesting to note that our 9th grade students showed the greatest benefit from our academic meetings and parent conferencing interventions. Only 38% of our 9th grade students reduced their F's at the end of 2nd term—but during 3rd term 73% of the 9th grade students reduced their F's, and 33% of these kids actually ended up with no "F" grades. During 4th term 85% of the 9th grade students reduced their F's and 33% of these students ended up with no "F" grades. We were excited to see this substantial improvement in academic performance!

In conclusion, we feel that having quarterly student/counselor meetings and parent phone conferences improved our students' academic performance by reducing the number of F grades they received. We can use this data summary to help us identify students who are at-risk academically, and to help us in referring students to our school success program in the up-coming school year.

Utah CCGP - Closing the Gap Report (Small Group)
Hillcrest Junior High School
Murray City School District
2006-2007

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to see if weekly meetings with counseling staff and School Success (at-risk) students would make a significant difference in students' academic performance. The experimental group was a sample of 7th, 8th and 9th grade students from our School Success classes. School Success is a pilot program for at-risk students focusing on academic, organizational and social skill acquisition for the purpose of improving academic performance. Counseling staff met weekly with the sample (experimental) group. The control group was those students not receiving weekly pull-out counseling. We examined the change in mid-term and final grades for 7th, 8th and 9th grade students by tallying the presence of and the increase or reduction of "F" grades each term. The hypothesis was that meeting with the students would improve their academic performance by reducing the number of F grades they received. 7th and 9th grade students showed no significant change in performance. However, be it small, 8th graders showed a progressive reduction in the number of F's received compared to the control group.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Introduction

- The purpose of this study was to see if weekly meetings with counseling staff and School Success (at-risk) students would make a significant difference in students' academic performance.
- The hope was to reduce the frequency of failing grades the School Success students received.

Participants

- There were twelve School Success students in the experimental group who received weekly pull-out counseling service through the course of the school year: two 7th graders, five 8th graders and five 9th graders. There were twenty-six School Success students as a control who did not receive pull-out counseling service.

Method

- Students were pulled out and counseled with on a weekly basis.
- The project started at the beginning of the 2006 school year and continued all school year.
- Evaluation included the use of the Utah State Student Information System (SIS) Low Achievement Lists for both mid-term and end of term reports. We specifically were looking the presence of, and increase or reduction of "F" grades at mid-term and at the end of each quarter.

RESULTS

The hypothesis was that meeting with the students would improve their academic performance by reducing the number of F grades they received. 7th and 9th grade students showed no significant change in performance. However, be it small, 8th graders showed a progressive reduction in the number of F's received compared to the control group.

A delineation of the data can be seen below.

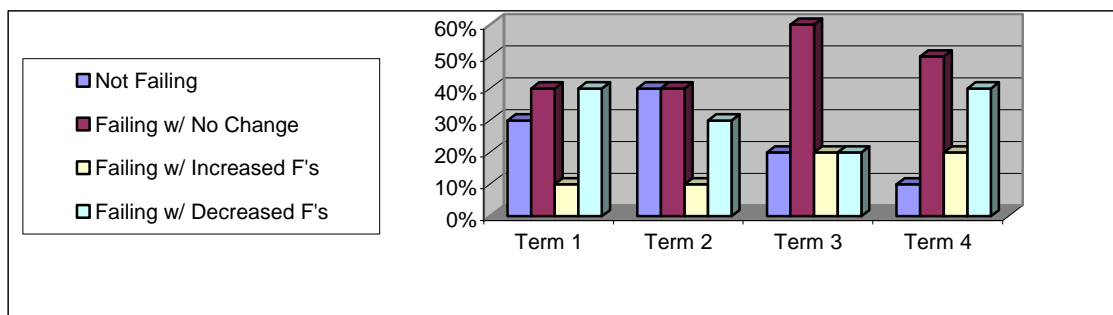
DISCUSSION

We did not see a significant reduction in the number of “F” grades our School Success students received. However, it should be noted that the population of students studied here are at-risk students. They previously had a history of struggling with their academics and attendance. We know that at-risk students tend to be more resistant to school based interventions. Additionally, we know that junior high school is one the most trying times in a young person’s life emotionally and socially. The benefits of meeting with a caring adult may not be measured well by examining the short term academic performance of these students. It may be that these students may have improved their attendance, social skills or general affect during the school year. This may be a better focus of this type of intervention in the future. In the grand ecology of these students, the benefits of cultivating a positive relationship with a significant agent of the school may change the students’ overall perception of secondary education. A change in the students’ perception may, long term, change the student’s willingness to be more committed and vigilant academically in the future school experiences.

HJH 7th Grade School Success Students w/o Counseling Intervention (Control)

n=10

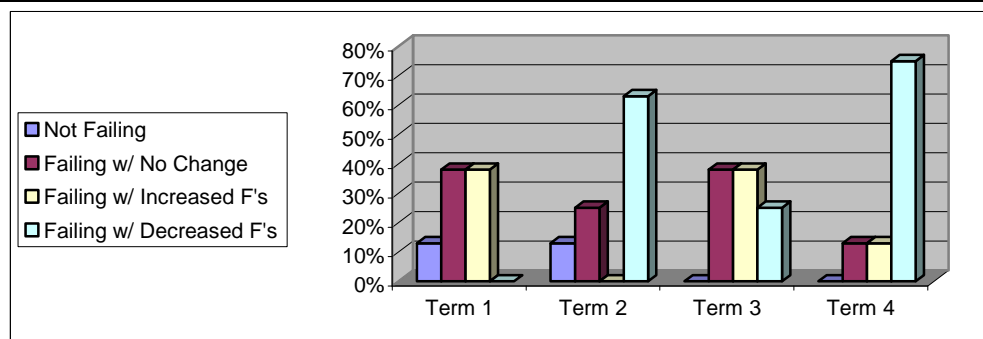
	Not Failing	Failing w/ No Change	Failing w/ Increased F's	Failing w/ Decreased F's
Term 1	30%	40%	10%	40%
Term 2	40%	40%	10%	30%
Term 3	20%	60%	20%	20%
Term 4	10%	50%	20%	40%



HJH 8th Grade School Success Students w/o Counseling Intervention (Control)

n=8

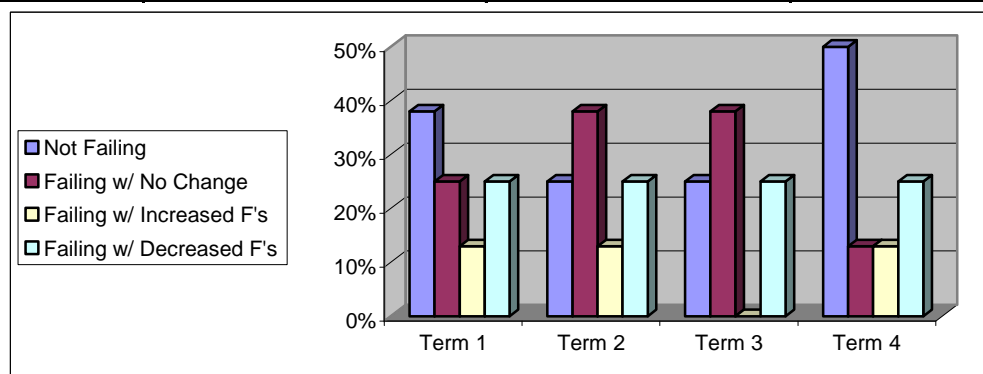
	Not Failing	Failing w/ No Change	Failing w/ Increased F's	Failing w/ Decreased F's
Term 1	13%	38%	38%	0%
Term 2	13%	25%	0%	63%
Term 3	0%	38%	38%	25%
Term 4	0%	13%	13%	75%



HJH 9th Grade School Success Students w/o Counseling Intervention (Control)

n=8

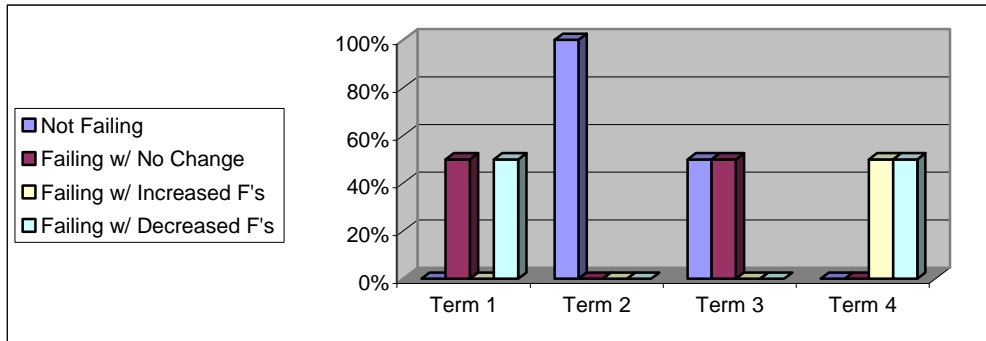
	Not Failing	Failing w/ No Change	Failing w/ Increased F's	Failing w/ Decreased F's
Term 1	38%	25%	13%	25%
Term 2	25%	38%	13%	25%
Term 3	25%	38%	0%	25%
Term 4	50%	13%	13%	25%



HJH 7th Grade School Success Students w/ Counseling Intervention (Exp)

n=2

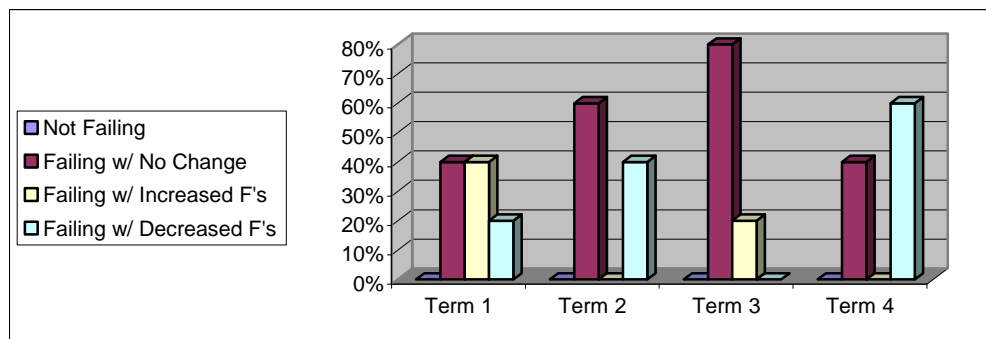
	Not Failing	Failing w/ No Change	Failing w/ Increased F's	Failing w/ Decreased F's
Term 1	0%	50%	0%	50%
Term 2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Term 3	50%	50%	0%	0%
Term 4	0%	0%	50%	50%



HJH 8th Grade School Success Students w/ Counseling Intervention (Exp)

n=5

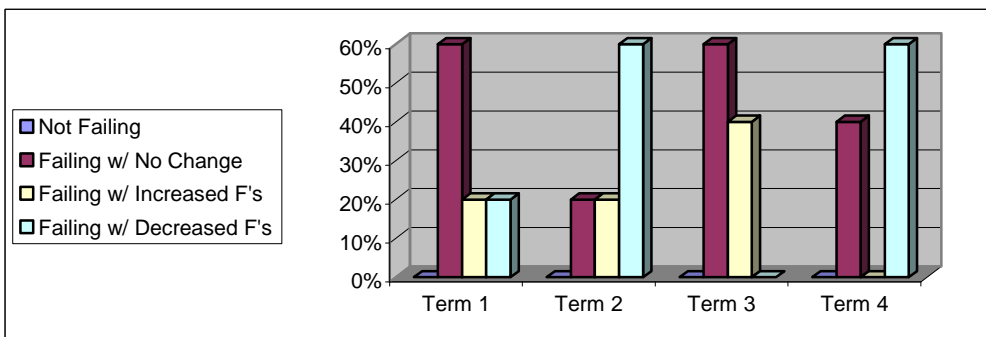
	Not Failing	Failing w/ No Change	Failing w/ Increased F's	Failing w/ Decreased F's
Term 1	0%	40%	40%	20%
Term 2	0%	60%	0%	40%
Term 3	0%	80%	20%	0%
Term 4	0%	40%	0%	60%



HJH 9th Grade School Success Students w/ Counseling Intervention (Exp)

n=5

	Not Failing	Failing w/ No Change	Failing w/ Increased F's	Failing w/ Decreased F's
Term 1	0%	60%	20%	20%
Term 2	0%	20%	20%	60%
Term 3	0%	60%	40%	0%
Term 4	0%	40%	0%	60%



MURRAY SCHOOL DISTRICT: RIVERVIEW JR. HIGH
Utah CCGP~~ Guidance Activities Results of Large Group 2006-7

Target Group: Total student body to create a more positive and productive school working environment for students and staff.

ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this project is to improve school climate by creating a school culture that values personal character traits, and helps students develop successful future work habits. Once a week, on Wednesday mornings throughout the school year, a cadre of students presented a mini-lesson to fellow students in all Advisory (Homeroom) classes, on a topic of interest relating to a character theme of the month. These themes promote changes in attitudes and behaviors that lead to success in school and in life: good citizenship, effort, empathy, respect, honesty, responsibility, appreciating diversity, and integrity. In surveying 140 of our 810 students, we found that 94% of students participated in these lessons, 53% felt the lessons had a positive effect on them, and almost 60% felt there was a positive effect on the student body.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

One of Riverview's Desired Results for Student Learning, or DRSL, is **personal and social responsibility**. This includes showing patriotism for our nation, showing respect for students and staff, honoring diversity and cultural heritage, demonstrating core values in respect ~ honesty ~ responsibility ~ tolerance ~ and caring, and in developing personal skills for the workplace, such as time management ~ perseverance ~ self-discipline ~ and planning. It is therefore important to us that all students participate in curriculum teaching these important skills.

Every student at Riverview is scheduled in an Advisory class, which is a year-long, 17-minute class with groups of 20-25 students and a teacher, who discuss school activities, listen to morning announcements, participate in school elections, see Ch. 1 World News for Students, and receive weekly character education lessons. These lessons are taught by fellow students in Advisory who volunteer or are elected or chosen by the teacher to represent their class in this way. This is an important group of leaders in our school

who are recognized for providing a valuable service. These leaders are able to make morning announcements on the various themes being studied, and are asked to maintain good grades and citizenship as an example to others. Our Advisory reps (representatives) earn a school service award in May at our Gallery of Stars Awards Night Gala, and are featured in a display case in the front entry of the school as important school leaders. Our Advisory Reps meet on Tuesday mornings with Mrs. Hansen, School Counselor, to receive the mini-lesson of the week and to discuss possible presentation techniques for the following day. This also takes place during the Advisory period.

Mrs. Hansen creates the lessons from a variety of materials available on these subjects which have been recommended or provided by the USOE, Utah State Office of Education, and other commercial publications. Every effort is made to present lively and interactive activities in the lessons. Timely topics from the news of the day are often featured, making the topics “real-life” and more interesting to students. Quotes and stories from well-known Americans, past and present, also relate more to students’ lives and are enjoyable to them. We have purchased video materials from the “Real People/Real Character” series and the “In Search of Character” program. Also, we have used current articles in student magazines, such as Scholastic Choices, which are timely and feature young people involved in scenarios teaching concepts in life skills. These have been referred to as the “soft skills” in employment: people skills that often determine who is hired and who is fired. We have now developed large files on each of the major monthly themes, and have tied them to future work skills. Teachers are encouraged to include these themes in their lessons as they occur naturally as reinforcement. We run contests and give awards and rewards to students who exemplify the character traits we value at Riverview. Our “Rebel Rules”, or school rules posted in every classroom, are as follows:
Riverview Rebels are ~~~ Prepared, Responsible, Respectful and Caring.

RESULTS:

This year 32 mini-lessons were presented by students in the Advisory classes on topics related to our monthly themes. A survey was administered to 140 of our approximately 810 member student body on May 24, 2007. Three Advisory classes at each grade level, 7 -- 8 -- 9, were randomly selected to participate in the survey, and all 140 surveys were completed and returned.

Results are presented below:

1. Have you experienced the character education lessons given weekly in Advisory classes this school year?

132/140 **94% YES**

8/140 6% NO

2. Do you feel these lessons have had a positive effect on you?

74/140 **53% YES**

59/140 42% NO

3. Do you feel these lessons have had a positive effect on other students at Riverview?

83/140 **60% YES**

55/140 40% NO

4. Do you enjoy having a student or students in your Advisory class act as the Advisory Reps who present the lessons?

73/140 **54% YES**

67/140 46% NO

5. Should we continue to present these lessons next year?

55/140 40% YES

80/140 **60% NO**

DISCUSSION:

The results of the survey are quite positive, in that the majority of students had the lessons presented in their Advisory classes, felt they had a positive effect on them and other students at Riverview, and liked having students teach the lessons. For a junior high, that is a pretty strong statement! However, even though the majority saw value in the lessons, 60% of students would prefer not to participate again next year --- again, so junior high! We also asked for "Comments" at the bottom of the surveys (so very brave of us), and they were quite interesting. Some of the nicer ones were: "This class is cool and good for hanging out with your friends." "It was good." "I enjoyed being the Advisory Rep. It was fun." Some of the

meaner ones were: “Stop these lessons. It’s boring. And besides I am in 9th grade and I don’t care.” “It is good but not for enough people. Most people just ignore it. So, it is pretty much pointless because they are the ones who need to hear it.” “Stop before someone becomes mentally disturbed!”

Other comments suggested to include more stories like some lessons have had, provide treats, make the lessons more fun, give more students a chance to be the leader. We will consider all of those ideas in the coming year as we seek to develop a curriculum that is interactive and exciting. The majority of students did not make comments on the survey, which in “pre-teen speak”, indicates there is not too much wrong with the whole thing. So, all in all, we are pleased with the results and optimistic about trying again to do even better next year!

Utah CCGP – Closing the Gap Results Report (Small Group) 2006-2007

School: Riverview Jr. High

Target Group: At risk and struggling learners

Target Group selections is based upon: District goals to help at risk and struggling learners

Abstract

Murray School District reduced the population of its alternative high school to 10-15 students maximum. Schools were required to come up with a plan to help at risk and struggling learners who would normally be referred to the alternative high school. Students were identified and placed into a School Success class to help guide and track these students. Previous end of year GPA's and current end of year GPA's were compared. 42% of students in the class increased their year end GPA.

Project Description

Introduction

- Murray School District decided to serve At Risk Students in the main population and use its alternative school for extreme cases
- Schools were given the directive to run a program that guides and tracks At Risk Students
- The goal is for At Risk Students to learn the skills necessary to build confidence and success in academics.

Participants

- Students were selected by teachers referral, GPA, behavior reports, participation in regular classes, ability
- During the year 48 students were identified and placed into one of three School Success classes for 8th and 9th graders

Method

- Classes were taught by regular ed teachers
- Subjects taught were character ed., time management, personal tracking systems, self worth, self exploration.
- Students were evaluated at the end of the semester for continued enrollment.
- Final GPA's from 2005-2006 were compared to final GPA's from 2006-2007

Results

- 20 out of 48 students, 42%, increased their end of year GPA
- 11 students participated only one semester, 37 participated a full year
- 8 out of the 11 (72%) semester only participants increased their end of year GPA.
- The 42% who increased their GPA, increased it by an average of .55
- The 8 semester only students who increased their GPA, increased by an average of .47

Discussion

The School Success program at Riverview Jr. High succeeded in helping 42% of students who may have been pulled from the main population and placed into an alternative school. With this being a trial year, we are pleased with the results since 42% of the students helped, are now beginning to head in the right direction with their academic future. We believe that these students, and the students who did not improve, will take with them a new confidence in the upcoming school year. They will see that the school was willing to work with them and not just send them away for someone else to deal with. This experience may be the seed many of these students have needed to succeed in their academic future.

Even though 42% is a good number, we can't help but focus on the 58% who did not increase. For the 2007-2008 year, we have begun to look at changes to the program and apply a stronger tracking component and support system for the students. We are changing the main teacher to one who is more experienced with At Risk Students. The counselors will collaborate more with this teacher and take on a larger role in the support provided to these students. There will be more involvement with the home and others who are in the student's life.